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31 May 1956

AQUATONE OPERATIONAL PLANS

1. In the light of the discussion of AQUATONE and related matters on 29 May, we have reviewed operational plans and possibilities in consultation with the Air Force. The following facts and considerations have a major bearing on our conclusions:

a. Work is going forward as rapidly as possible to prepare facilities in Turkey but these cannot be ready much before 1 August. Operations could be initiated in Germany by 15 June.

b. The six weeks from mid-June to late July that can be gained by starting operations in Germany are of especial importance because the weather is at its best and the days are longest at that time of the year. Operations over all target areas can be conducted more frequently and more productively in June and July than during the autumn and winter. These months acquire added importance from the fact that operations can be usefully conducted over northern target areas only during the summer months.

c. A second unit will be ready for deployment overseas early in August and facilities should be ready to receive it. There would not be room for both units at Adana, Turkey. In any event it is desirable to base operations at two or more locations so as to secure maximum coverage and to preserve our flexibility in the face of changing political circumstances.

d. Providing reasonably good security can be maintained locally, the operation of our equipment at a German base should involve no greater risk of compromise than its operation [REDACTED] since unauthorized persons are given the same opportunity to see it from a distance at any overseas base. Its appearance at several locations in Europe is consistent with the cover story that is being used and might help to dispell any air of mystery about the activity.

e. We are actively planning for operations in the Far East and expect shortly to select a base in that area and move forward with the preparation of any specialized facilities. However, in terms of numbers, some four-fifths of our intelligence targets in the USSR, and in terms of quality a higher percentage of really important targets, are accessible from Europe

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rather than from the Far East. Moreover, many of the Far Eastern targets have been, or can more readily be, covered by other means. It is for this reason that we propose to use the first two units in Europe and the third in the Far East.

2. The major task to which all of our preparations have been directed is the performance of long-range missions over areas hitherto inaccessible with any degree of safety. Such missions promise to yield decisively valuable intelligence obtainable in no other way. Time is of the essence in the performance of this task since the technical advantage that has been gained is only temporary and the security that cloaks it is a wasting asset. Before long, the Russians will develop the capability consistently to track and somewhat later to intercept high altitude aircraft. We must assume that they will soon have photographs of our equipment which will allow them to guess at its performance and will stimulate their efforts. Meanwhile, with the mere passage of time, the maintenance of tight security grows more difficult. Accordingly, it is our conviction that the sooner we are able to embark upon our major task the more securely it can be accomplished.

3. On the basis of the above considerations we propose to proceed as follows:

a. We are making preparations to start operations from Germany if possible by 15 June.

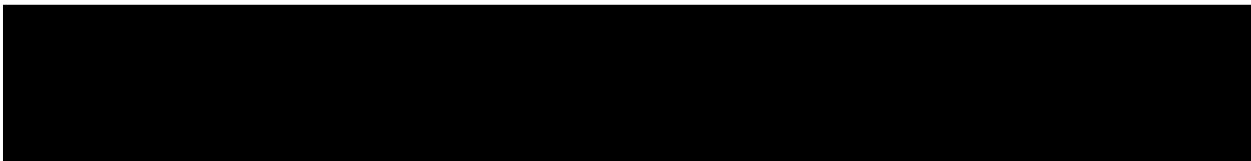
b. Initially we will limit ourselves to missions over the Satellites. These fall within the pattern of operations already in progress by the Air Force.

c. After a few such missions have been flown, we will, if all goes well, seek permission to undertake longer-range missions.

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4. The Chief of Air Staff concurs in the above conclusions as far as they concern operational matters. (Specifically he concurs in 3. a, b, and c but makes no comment on 3. d and e.) The Secretary of State also concurs in the above conclusions.

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